

Warrane College celebrates 50 years

The university residence for young men celebrated in style with a Gala dinner.

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Warrane College was a dream of St Josemaria's, and like many of his dreams, it became a reality before his death.

This year marks 50 years since the university residence for young men opened its doors on the campus of

the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

In 1963, members of Opus Dei had travelled from the United States of America and from Spain to begin working in Australia. And Cardinal Gilroy – the first Australian cardinal – who had met St Josemaria in Rome, invited them to start a residence for more than 200 students.

It was an ambitious job.

The early 1970s was a difficult time for a group of foreign people to establish such a residence in Sydney and promote family values. Riots and protests against the Vietnam War were common, and the crowd found another cause to rail against - demanding that Opus Dei had no place at UNSW.

Yet the first workers who operated the college ploughed on and worked with great faith. They were

encouraged by the words of St Josemaria, who was following their progress from Rome and praying for the future fruits of this dream.

On 13 July 1971 the Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler, officially opened the college. And on 12 June 2021, the now Governor of NSW, Margaret Beazley, stood in front of 400 guests at a celebratory gala dinner to say that Warrane's ambitious dream had become a reality – with many fruits to show for it. “What has served Warrane especially well has been blending the traditions of college life and academic excellence with a spiritual heart,” she said.

“Embedding social responsibility as part of everyday life, creating internal and external social hubs, not cocooning its students in a monoculture, but maintaining an openness to the world around it,

allowing those of faith, of no faith and of different faiths to live with each, to understand each other and to learn from each other.”

Many residents in the past 50 years have found faith in Warrane. There have been baptisms, weddings, and requiem Masses. One of the very first residents, Willie Wong, was from Malaysia. He studied engineering and did a masters. In his six-year stay, he excelled in many sports. His name is known by all the residents as it is the name of the weekly award for the best sportsman in the college. He couldn't travel to Australia due to Covid-19 but sent a video message to all the guests.

400 people, representative of five decades of history, gathered for the celebration: many from different places and walks of life, but all united by the customs that residents of Warrane have come to know and

love. Evening get-togethers, coined 'Coffee Club', were remembered as treasured moments to celebrate birthdays, listen to other people talk about their own country, or just to chat about life and the meaning of the universe.

Old boys shared memories of loud, boisterous crowds of men marching down the street, dressed in red to cheer on Warrane's sporting teams in the inter-college sports tournament. There were memories of formal dinners with eminent guests, social functions that still clash at times with the prevailing university environment, and all sorts of pranks and mishaps that every generation of residents have enjoyed (or suffered from).

On Sunday 13 June, 2021, a large cake was prepared by Warrane's Household Administration, which has been the backbone of family life

in Warrane for half a century. Cutting it was Warrane's inaugural Master, Fr Joe Martins. The current Master, Professor Gerald Fogarty, raised a toast to all those who have worked and lived in Warrane over the years and all those who are keeping the dream alive.

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